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U.S.-Taliban Talks

Work Under Capitalism

Big Pharma

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Table of Contents

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| Editorial..... | 2 |
| Egyptian Revolution..... | 3 |
| "Bad Pharma"..... | 5 |
| U.S.-Taliban Talks..... | 6 |
| Fighting Fund..... | 7 |
| Work Under Capitalism..... | 8 |
| Matchgirls' Strike..... | 10 |
| Ted Grant on Trotsky..... | 11 |
| Grocery Workers..... | 12 |
| Midwest School..... | 13 |
| Our Program..... | 15 |
| NSA Leaks..... | 16 |

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The Roar of Revolution

As we discussed the cover and contents for this issue of *Socialist Appeal*, the focus changed rapidly from the NSA and Edward Snowden, to the uprising in Turkey, to the mass protests in Brazil, and finally settled on the magnificent and riveting revival of the Egyptian revolution. This is a graphic illustration of the times we live in: an epoch of war, revolution, counterrevolution, crisis, and instability. From one day to the next, like a "lightning bolt from a clear blue sky," dramatic events can shake the world and galvanize workers' attention. But with the grinding crisis of capitalism as a backdrop, these events should surprise no one. They are part and parcel of one and the same process: the process of the world socialist revolution.

Over the last few weeks, the relative calm of the previous months was shattered. Turkey and Brazil, supposed bastions of regional stability and "models" for the world to follow, exploded in class struggle. In Iran, the election results shocked most observers, and revealed the resilience of the masses in their efforts to use every opportunity to weaken the regime. In Portugal and Greece, enormous general strikes continue to hammer away at the austerity-imposing governments, which will eventually fall as a result of the pressure.

With the coming to power of the Muslim Brotherhood, imperialist intervention in Libya, and the quagmire of Syria, many had proclaimed the "Arab Spring" dead and buried, replaced instead by the "Winter of Reaction." But the events of the last few years are a reminder that revolutions are a dialectically contradictory process, not a linear, one-act drama. For the Marxists, there was never any doubt that the colossal reserves of revolutionary energy in the Middle East and North Africa are far from being exhausted. What is lacking is not a spirit of sacrifice and a burning desire for a fundamental change. To paraphrase Trotsky, what is lacking is leadership, leadership, and again, leadership! It will have to be built in the heat of events, and the Moroccan comrades of the IMT, who produce the Arabic-language website Marxy.com are playing a key role in this work.

The NSA revelations also come as no surprise to the Marxists. However, the scope of the spying, the collusion between the government and technology companies, and the fact that it is now confirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt, has opened many people's eyes to the reality of the "freedoms" we enjoy at the beginning of the 21st century. The excuse may be terrorism, but the real, long-term target of these activities is the labor movement and the left. The mass movements erupting around the world are a mirror image of what we will see right here in the heart of imperialism. Similar conditions lead to similar results, and austerity cannot be imposed indefinitely without the working class fighting back. Like wildfires, economic crises and revolutions do not respect borders, and the ruling class is preparing for the battles ahead. The workers must do the same!

However, the need to spy on everyone in order to monitor their activities is a sign of weakness, not of strength. It is a reflection of the precarious situation capitalism finds itself in. If the system was booming, and the workers were confident in the future, then the system itself would convince people that it is the "best of all possible worlds." In fact, precisely the opposite is true. Capitalism itself is doing most of the work of convincing the workers that it is a decrepit and historically obsolete system.

Even the *Wall Street Journal* understands this. In a recent article by Francis Fukuyama—whose infamous words about "the end of history" after the collapse of the USSR are now coming back to haunt him—we find the following: "The new middle class is not just a challenge for authoritarian regimes or new democracies. No established democracy should believe it can rest on its laurels, simply because it holds elections and has leaders who do well in opinion polls. The technologically empowered middle class will be highly demanding of their politicians across the board . . . The U.S. and Europe are experiencing sluggish growth and persistently high unemployment, which for young people in countries like Spain reaches 50%. In the rich world, the older generation also has failed the young by bequeathing them crushing debts. No politician in the U.S. or Europe should look down complacently on the events unfolding in the streets of Istanbul and São Paulo. It would be a grave mistake to think, 'It can't happen here.'"

Replace "middle class" with "working class" and you have a fairly accurate assessment of the situation from one of the most prominent mouthpieces of capitalism. In historic terms, the United States will not be long in joining our working class sisters and brothers in open revolt against this system. But as in Egypt, what is lacking in the United States is a revolutionary leadership with deep roots in the working class and among the youth. Building such a leadership in advance of the historic events that are on the horizon is the task the Workers International League has set itself.

Standing on the sidelines, pessimistically complaining about the crisis of the system, engaging in mindless activism, launching doomed and unprincipled efforts to achieve "left unity," and forming "revolutionary parties" of just a handful of people with no capacity or perspective for connecting with the living movement of the workers, will get us nowhere. Fighting for revolutionary internationalism, a mass party of labor based on the unions, and educating workers and young people in the ideas and methods of Marxism is a painstaking process, but there is no other way forward. We invite you to join us in this struggle.

John Peterson, Editor

Egypt Shows Way for Arab Revolution

by Alan Woods

Morsi has fallen. The magnificent movement of the masses has once more shown to the entire world the authentic face of the Egyptian people. It shows that the revolution, which many even on the Left believed was stalled, still possesses immense social reserves. Despite the lying propaganda that tries to present the revolution as a "coup," this was a genuine popular insurrection, which spread like wildfire through every city and town in Egypt. This was the Second Egyptian Revolution.

Over the last week there were some 17 million in the streets, and calls for general strike were in the air. This was the most unprecedented popular uprising in history. In its scale and sweep, it far surpassed the revolution that overthrew the dictator Mubarak less than two years ago.

With no party, no organization or leadership, the masses fearlessly challenged a hated regime. In the words of Marx, following in the footsteps of the Paris Commune, they "stormed heaven." The Revolution is advancing with seven-league boots, pushing aside all obstacles.

Trotsky explains that "the history of a revolution is for us first of all a history of the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny." That is the inner meaning of the Egyptian Revolution. Like every great revolution, it has stirred up society to the depths. It has given a voice and a form to the shapeless aspirations of the masses for a decent life and a better future.

"But the masses are politically confused; they have no clear program and do not know what they want!" This is the sterile reasoning of formalists and sectarians. It is the product of ignorance of what a revolution is.

By its very nature, revolution signifies the entry onto the stage of history of the millions of politically untutored people. They have read no Marxist books and are not members of any party. But they are the real mainspring of the revolution, and the only guarantee of its success.

In the early stages of the revolution the masses are confused and naïve. Naturally! Who was there to educate them? Who can do so now? The masses can only learn through their direct experience of action. They are learning from the greatest book of all—the book of life.

In a revolution, however, the masses learn fast. The men and women on the streets of Cairo, Alexandria, and other cities have learned more over the past days and weeks than in the whole of their lives. Above all, they have learned their own collective power—the power to challenge governments and states, politicians and bureaucrats, gen-



erals and police chiefs—and to win.

This is a very powerful lesson, but also a very dangerous one from the standpoint of the ruling class—and not only in Egypt. The leaders of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, and Qatar are trembling in their shoes. But the shock waves from Egypt are spreading far further afield.

The people of Egypt are setting a dangerous example to the workers and youth of the whole world. In Portugal, the government is on the verge of collapse as a result of mass demonstrations and a general strike. The people of Portugal are refusing to accept the imposition of more pain by the bourgeois gang in Brussels and Berlin. The entire plan of "austerity for the workers and profits for the bankers" is threatened by this—and with it, the future of the Euro itself.

The reaction of the imperialists to the events in Egypt has been a combination of fear, impotence, and treachery in equal measure. The Americans were just as powerless to influence these events as they were two years ago. They have been compelled to resort to backstage maneuvering and intrigues with the tops of the Egyptian army, backed up by threats and blackmail.

The comically misnamed "free press" of Europe and the USA has produced a poisonous flood of lies and misrepresentation. The first and most blatant lie is that Morsi was removed, not by the movement of the masses, but by an army "coup." This is an "explanation" that explains nothing.

Everybody knows that the army chiefs did a deal with Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood a year ago that handed nominal power to those thieves and gangsters in return for leaving the old state apparatus intact. The murderers and torturers of the old regime were allowed to get off free.

Not one general or police chief was put on trial for crimes against the people. They

were allowed to continue plundering the state and filling their pockets as before, and the wealthy businessmen who stand behind the Muslim Brotherhood were permitted to participate in the plunder.

If the army chiefs decided to ditch Morsi it was only because they were compelled to do so by the irresistible movement of the masses. The generals were afraid that if they did not act, the masses might go further and move to take power into their own hands. As they did with Mubarak, they decided to sacrifice Morsi in order to save whatever could be saved of the old state apparatus and above all, their own wealth, power, and privileges.

The bourgeois media is pushing the line that this "coup" does not bode well for "democracy" in Egypt. On the television screens they show tearful representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood protesting that this was a blow to democracy as the "legitimately elected" president was removed by the military, comparing this to the coup in the 1950s, which led to decades of dictatorship.

By constantly harping on the fact that it was the military that removed Morsi, they are striving to divert attention away from the fact that it was the masses who brought about the overthrow of Morsi.

This was not a coup. On the contrary, it was imposed on the military by the masses. The generals have made it clear that they do not want to take over the government. That is hardly surprising. One only has to take one look at the heaving mass of humanity in Tahrir Square to understand the impossibility of the army controlling such a vast movement. Instead, the generals decided to ride on the back of the tiger. The problem is that a man who rides on the back of a tiger will encounter serious difficulties when he tries to dismount.

The second big lie that is being painstakingly disseminated by the media is that

Morsi was Egypt's "first freely elected President," that he therefore has "legitimacy" and the people should have been patient and waited for new elections, just as the "civilized" Americans, French, and British do.

When this puerile argument was put to a protester in Tahrir Square, he merely answered: "But this is a Revolution!" That was a very good reply. Since when does a revolution bow its head before existing laws, governments, and institutions? A revolution by its very nature challenges, defies, and tries to overthrow the existing order, its laws, rules, and values. To demand of a revolution that it show respect for the institutions and personalities it is trying to overthrow is to demand that revolution should renounce itself.

The argument that Morsi's government was democratic is false to the core. Neither the way it came to power nor the way it ruled was genuinely democratic. The majority of Egyptians did not vote for Morsi, as has been so often alleged. Only 46.42% of eligible voters went to the polls in the first round of the presidential election. Many of those who did vote for Morsi on the second ballot did so under the illusion that they were voting for the "lesser evil," to defend "democracy," and so on. Even sections of the Left advocated a vote for Morsi on this basis, a very wrong position, which we sharply criticized at the time. Our criticism has been amply justified by what followed.

Morsi was not the "lesser evil." The methods of Morsi's rule were in no way different from the methods of Mubarak. In fact, they were carried out by the same people. During his twelve-month rule, hundreds of protesters were killed and thousands of activists were persecuted, beaten and imprisoned by his thugs only because they mobilized politically against him.

Pogroms were organized against Christians, Shias, and other religious minorities. The rights of the workers were systematically undermined. He orchestrated a legal coup in the main union federation. He had 21 innocent football fans sentenced to death. Women were sexually assaulted on the streets in order to intimidate them into submission. Egypt was being pushed towards an undemocratic and repressive Islamic constitution. Morsi gave himself special powers that went far beyond his constitutional rights. Finally, he declared his intention to push Egypt into the sectarian maelstrom in Syria.

The "democrats" now advise the workers to be patient, to wait until the next election, to "give democracy a chance," and so on and so forth. But these "democrats" are well fed and live in nice houses. They can afford to be patient, since the bourgeois democracy they defend has already given them very satisfactory results. But the masses cannot wait. They have been hungry for 12 months while others live in abundance. They are homeless while oth-

ers live in luxury. Even people who voted for Morsi in the hope of some improvement have seen their hopes dashed. The intensity of their anger is proportionate to the degree of their expectations.

For the masses, democracy is not an empty word. The acid test of democracy is if it can fill empty stomachs. The Egyptian revolution was not fought in order to provide lucrative jobs for professional politicians. It was a rebellion of the masses against exploitation, unemployment, and poverty. In a revolution the mood of the masses changes with lightning rapidity. By contrast, the lumbering machinery of parliamentary democracy is slow and lags behind events. Morsi's alleged legitimacy was based on the vote of a minority, and the support that he had then has largely melted away.

A revolution is not a one-act drama. It unfolds through a series of stages, in which the masses try to find a way out of the crisis, looking first at one political party or leader, then another. In the first stages, which are characterized by the explosive entry of the masses into the political arena, their lack of political experience and naïveté leads them to take the path of least resistance. But they soon learn that the "easy" way turns out to be the most painful and difficult.

In the absence of a strong revolutionary party, a section of the masses looked towards the Muslim Brotherhood, which was the only seriously organized party at that time. The leaders of the Brotherhood, skilled in deception, took great care to hide the real material and class interests that lay behind their rhetoric.

But once in power, they soon came out in their real colors. Reaching a deal with the army chiefs, they betrayed all the hopes of their supporters. The opinion of the masses swung decisively against them, leading directly to the present situation. This represents a new and qualitatively higher stage of the Egyptian Revolution.

There will be a whole series of movements and upheavals, and a whole series of unstable governments, because on a capitalist basis no solution for Egypt's problems is possible. There will be new uprisings, but also periods of tiredness, disappointment, despair, defeats, and even reaction. But every interruption will be followed by new explosions. That is rooted in the nature of the period.

This inspiring movement was a genuinely mass movement. Revolutionary committees sprang up across the country. A general strike was launched. Millions occupied the streets. The government was suspended in mid-air. The demonstrators surrounded the President's palace, padlocked the gates and put up posters saying: "Closed by Order of the Revolution."

Government buildings were occupied by ordinary people—bricklayers, carpenters, shopkeepers, clerks, students, and teachers. They were joined in some cases by ordinary soldiers and officers. Policemen in uniform joined the demonstrators to

express their solidarity.

In the last few days in Egypt, power was lying in the streets, waiting for somebody to pick it up. The tragedy is that there is no real leadership to take over. Morsi was overthrown by a revolution, just as the tsar was overthrown in Russia in February 1917. But the experience of the Russian Revolution showed that it is not enough to overthrow the old regime. Something has to be put in its place. In the case of Russia, the existence of the Bolshevik Party under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky was the decisive factor that allowed the Revolution to triumph. But no such party exists in Egypt. It must be built in the heat of events.

In reality, power was in the people's hands. But if this power is not organized, it can slip through their fingers. When the movement subsides and the people return to their daily lives, the professional politicians, the careerists, and merchants will hijack the Revolution and reach dirty deals behind the backs of the people. Nothing will have changed, and in a year or so the people will have to come back onto the streets.

The people of Egypt cannot wait for the army or anyone else to take decisions for them. Workers' control should be immediately introduced in the factories and workplaces to guarantee production, protect workers' conditions and rights, and expose the corruption, swindling, and mismanagement of the bosses and bureaucrats.

In order to defend the Revolution against terrorist attacks by supporters of the deposed President and Islamo-fascist elements, the workers must be armed and organized into a militia, linked to the revolutionary committees. People's revolutionary courts should be set up, linked to the revolutionary committees, to arrest and try counterrevolutionaries and to punish those guilty of crimes against the people.

Bread! Work! and Houses! Confiscate the wealth of the rich who have plundered the wealth of Egypt for generations, and use it to rebuild a shattered country. Down with the capitalists and bureaucrats who have robbed and exploited us!

For a government of workers and peasants that will nationalize the big banks and corporations under democratic workers' control and mobilize the wealth of Egypt for the benefit of the millions of toilers, not a handful of wealthy parasites.

For a program of public works to build schools, hospitals, roads, and houses, both to provide employment for the unemployed and to solve the problem of bad housing and homelessness.

Form elected action committees in every workplace, area, school, and university. Trust only yourselves and your popular democratic committees. Control your leaders. If they do not act according to your wishes, remove them and replace them with those who will.

All power to the revolutionary committees! Long live the Arab Socialist Revolution! ♦

Book Review: *Bad Pharma*

by Rob Constable

Pharmaceutical companies bend or withhold scientific data and lie about their drugs in ways which endanger, harm, or kill sick people, to make a profit. That is the shocking reality laid bare in Ben Goldacre's new book, *Bad Pharma: How Drug Companies Mislead Doctors and Harm Patients*. This is a prime example of how the profit of capitalism stands in the way of human progress.

The book's indictment of the pharmaceutical industry stems from the fact that drugs are tested by companies which manufacture and sell them for profit. As a result, the scientific reality of the effectiveness of new drugs and the potential harm they may do is hidden by companies in the interests of making large sums of money (about \$600 billion a year).

The aim of clinical drug trials should be to objectively ascertain the effectiveness and safety of new drugs. However, drug trial results which reflect badly on products which may be profitable are routinely hidden. Drug companies, as a matter of course, only submit trial data for publication in the scientific literature which shows their products in a positive light.

As only data published in the scientific literature is accessible to doctors, patients, and those who run health services, negative information about new drugs is hidden from those who need it to inform their decisions about whether or not to use new drugs.

Goldacre describes this in a recent TED talk as "a cancer at the core of evidence-based medicine." It is known in the medical profession as publication bias, and a 2011 systematic review of the phenomenon (a huge meta-analysis of all of the clinical trial literature) revealed that the results of half of all clinical trials that are carried out by drug companies are never reported, and that positive findings about new drugs are twice as likely to be published as negative findings. Another study found that 85% of pharmaceutical company-funded trials showed their drugs had positive effects, compared to only 50% in government-funded trials.

This, says Goldacre, "is research fraud"; misrepresentation of the truth about a drug not by fabricating trial data, but by selectively publishing that which shows it in a positive light. Consequently, doctors must decide which medicines to prescribe their patients based on potentially meaningless data; decisions which if made badly can mean severe side effects or even patient death.

In the recent past, pharmaceutical companies have hidden information about severe drug side effects from doctors and

patients; side effects in severity up to and including patient death. For example, the diabetes drug Rosiglitazone made by Glaxosmithkline (GSK) was found to increase the risk of heart attacks. Rosiglitazone, which came on the market in 1999, was found to increase heart problems by 43% in a 2000 study by the WHO. This result was subsequently confirmed by GSK and the FDA in 2006, but not published by them until 2008. This means that for several years, doctors prescribed it without knowing the risks.

There have been many cases where trial data which indicates side effects has been hidden and patients have suffered. For example, GSK tried to obscure the fact that the antidepressant Paroxetine increases the risk of suicide. And the fact that the now-banned painkiller Vioxx increased the risk of heart attacks was not initially advertised by its manufacturer while it was on the market.

In 2009, Tamiflu was stockpiled in the UK and by governments around the world during the hysteria of the Swine Flu epidemic, at a cost of £500 million to the UK taxpayer. However, it is not clear that Tamiflu would have ever been effective against swine flu, had the epidemic spread to the UK, because Roche, which makes Tamiflu, withheld clinical trial data about the drug. If Tamiflu was clearly effective, why would they withhold the data proving it?

The likely reality is that Tamiflu is not always an effective treatment against influenza infection, and that had swine flu become epidemic in Britain, the public would have suffered for the lack of an effective treatment.

Drugs are not developed by pharmaceutical companies if they cannot generate profits. Therefore, as drug companies have monopolized the development, production, and distribution of medicines, people around the world suffer unnecessarily. Research for treatments for diseases which affect those in the developing world, where consumers and governments are poorer, have not received the same research resources as so-called "first world" diseases. Resources are more often poured into research into treatments for health problems like obesity and neurological diseases, in order to cater to the lucrative drug market in wealthier countries.

Historically, research into treatments for pestilences like "African Sleeping Sickness" and malaria has not been as rigorously pursued because less profit is to be made from such drugs. Profit, rather than minimizing human suffering, is the principal motivation of those who direct the research and business strategies of drug companies, and this results in unnecessary



misery on a global scale.

Unfortunately, Goldacre adopts a reformist stance, writing that "The current regulations for companies, doctors and researchers—create perverse incentives; and we'll have better luck fixing those broken systems than we will ever have trying to rid the world of avarice." But by allowing market forces to control how our medicines are discovered, tested, and distributed we inevitably invite the desire for profit to block human progress. This book highlights once again the pernicious effects of capitalism on humanity.

Capitalism rewards personal greed and the quest for profit. In the field of drug development the drive for profit by pharmaceutical company executives has corrupted what should be a selfless struggle to assuage human suffering: the discovery and design of medicines that make sick people well. Proper reform of drug trial regulations, forcing all data about new drugs to be freely available to everyone, even if it reflects badly on the products of drug companies, is critical, but though this might stop misleading data causing harm, it would not rid us of the corrupting profit motive which drives drug development today and which limits its effectiveness in ending human misery.

The best solution to the corruption of the pharmaceutical industry is to end profit-driven drug design and distribution. Given how important the development and production of medicines is to society, how beneficial they are, and how damaging they can be if they go wrong, the only way to make the drug industry is truly serve humanity as a whole is to take it from the forces of capital.

The only solution is socialism. We must nationalize the pharmaceutical industry and run it in the interest of the majority. Take profit out of the equation, and let society pay for the democratically controlled development, manufacture, and distribution of drugs, in the interests of alleviating human suffering. This is what medicine should be all about. ♦

U.S.-Taliban Talks and the Hoax of Peace

by Lal Khan in Pakistan

Just hours before the beginning of the peace talks between the Taliban and the U.S. delegation in Qatar, the mercurial Afghan President Karzai suspended talks on a long-term security deal to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan after NATO leaves in 2014.

Irritated by a press conference in Qatar at which the Taliban effectively portrayed themselves as a government in exile, Karzai is reported to have said, "As long as the peace process is not Afghan-led, the High Peace Council will not participate in the talks in Qatar." His office later added in a statement, "The Taliban's flag and the banner of the Islamic Emirate was something we did not expect . . . In view of the contradiction between acts and the statements made by the United States of America in regard to the peace process . . . the suspension of the talks will continue until there is clarity from the United States."

These are daring words from a man who was installed with his puppet regime by the western imperialists after the occupation of Afghanistan by the U.S. forces in 2001. This is a clear display of weakness by U.S. imperialism brought to the fore by the economic crisis and the military defeats in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, repeated phone calls by John Kerry, the U.S. Secretary of State, appeared to have mollified Karzai, and according to BBC News, he now wants to "keep wheels moving again" and that he may be willing to continue with security handover talks at least.

The Karzai-Obama declaration in January, the Cameron-Karzai-Zardari Chequers summit in February, and the Kerry-Karzai-Kayani meeting in Brussels in April have all been desperately trying to get the Taliban back to the negotiating table. President Obama said after the G8 summit in Enniskillen in Northern Ireland that, "This is an important first step towards reconciliation; although it's a very early step...we anticipate there will be a lot of bumps in the road."

The whole scenario of setting up a palatial office for the Taliban by the oil-rich reactionary Qataris seems to be surreal. While the Americans were devastating Afghanistan, and the Taliban were involved in an orgy of terror and bloodshed for the last 12 years, the Saudis and now the emerging Qatari monarchy had retained relations and funded sections of the Taliban to fulfill their hegemonic designs in the regions.

These reactionary despotic monarchies, at the behest of U.S. imperialism, are fully behind these Islamic fundamentalists not only in Afghanistan, but also in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and other countries in the region. These regimes impose an iron grip



and a ferocious repression in their own kingdoms. *The Economist* wrote in its issue of June 8: "In an Emirate presenting itself as the face and the financier of regional reform, Qataris could be forgiven for asking when they may taste at home what their leaders preach abroad. Political parties are banned in Qatar. So are demonstrations, trade unions and associations . . ." Death sentences are meted out to people even for writing poetry that smells of resistance against the tyrannies of the regime. Mohammad al Ajami, a poet, was sentenced in 2011 to life imprisonment.

It is a myth that the Taliban are a homogeneous and centrally organized body. There are numerous groups led by different warlords representing capital, from poppy growers and drugs, to those involved in kidnappings, ransom, and other crimes, and they have been tearing each other apart for control of this ill-gotten booty. They all represent black reaction and are aligned with the regional and international imperialist powers that are involved in this new "Great Game" to exploit and control minerals resources, gas pipelines, road, rail, sea, and naval strategic networks.

The Chinese, the Indians, the Russians, the Iranians, the Saudis, and of course the Pakistani state and secret agencies have stakes in this conflict. The U.S., Britain, and France have their own share of fundamentalist protégé outfits. It is therefore a mystery which group or coalition of groups there is to negotiate with in Qatar, and who is their sponsor. Secondly, the prospect of a negotiated settlement and peace through these talks is, to say the least, an absurdity.

U.S. commander in Afghanistan, General Joseph Dunford, has already admitted he is skeptical about whether it is possible to broker a peace deal with the Haqqanis, the most feared of the insurgent factions. According to an AFP report of June 19, "A divided insurgency is likely to complicate peace talks." There are many other fundamentalist outfits that will try to sabotage

these talks. Even those represented in Qatar will face splits and disintegrations of their groups with the hardliners breaking away in fear of losing the assets and the money they had accumulated in this reactionary war. The Taliban delegation in Qatar has until now refused to accept the preconditions set by the U.S. negotiators, which include breaking ties with Al-Qaeda, recognizing the regime in Kabul, and many others. Then there is the question of the regime in Kabul and the Northern Alliance, which is bitterly opposed to any direct negotiations with the Taliban.

The Taliban captured Kabul in September 1996 with the support of the ISI [Pakistan's secret services] and Benazir Bhutto's government in Pakistan. The financial support from the U.S., particularly through Robert Oakley, former U.S. assistant Secretary of State and advisor to the American oil giant UNOCAL at the time, has been well documented in several works on Afghanistan. U.S. imperialism balked at the Taliban only after their government under Mullah Omar double-crossed UNOCAL. Apart from sending a delegation to its head office in Texas, the Taliban sent another delegation at the same time to Buenos Aires to the headquarters of BRIDAS, an Argentinean oil conglomerate, to negotiate an even more lucrative deal of laying a pipeline from Central Asia through Afghanistan. The rest, as they say, is history.

The mineral wealth and strategic importance of Afghanistan have become a curse for its inhabitants. The only good memories are of the reforms introduced by the PDPA government led by Noor Mohammad Tarakai after the Saur ("spring") revolution of April 1978. In the period of 18 months before the Russian invasion of December 29, 1979, radical progressive reforms were carried out to alleviate the oppressed masses.

The imperialist intervention actually started then, when the fundamentalists were recruited and the "dollar jihad" was set in motion by the CIA to counter

the revolution through the vicious Zia dictatorship in Pakistan and the Saudi intelligence agencies. The CIA recruited Osama bin Laden in 1978 to lead the jihad. Now the Americans want a face-saving exit. The precondition of disassociation from Al-Qaeda is now a U.S. negotiating aim. "We don't expect that they would decry Al-Qaeda and denounce terrorism immediately off the top—this is the end goal," said Jennifer Psaki for the United States Department of State.

These negotiations can neither bring peace nor can they provide the imperialists an alibi. U.S. imperialism is a diminishing economic and military power. It cannot offer the Taliban peace any more than it could secure it for the current regime of President Hamid Karzai. The Taliban could not win this war outright, nor could they be crushed by the imperialist armies. With the withdrawal of large portion of Americans, the violence will not really diminish, but the so-called "anti-imperialist stance" of the fundamentalists will be fractured.

Even if a face-saving deal is sealed, it will not protect Afghanistan from more bloodshed, if the history of past agreements offers any lessons. Let us not forget a Saudi-brokered effort which ended when a prince brought commanders to Mecca to swear they would respect a pact, but their troops started shelling each other again before the men had even left the holy city.

The imperialists and the Taliban are both based on finance capital; hence they are two sides of the same coin. The menace of fundamentalism can only be defeated and smashed when its base, finance capital, is destroyed. This system has to be overthrown. It is the task of the youth and the toilers of Afghanistan to rid the country of terrorism, obscurantism, and imperial domination.

Shallow gestures about democracy and human rights under the crushing domination of capital will not end the extreme poverty, misery, alienation, and deprivation that stalk Afghanistan; these can only be removed through a socialist revolution.

The Durand Line between Afghanistan and Pakistan, imposed by the British imperialists in 1893, is an artificial divide of a people who have the same language and culture. Hence the events in Afghanistan will reverberate and have an impact in Pakistan, especially among its Pushtoon population. There cannot be two separate revolutions.

The 1978 revolution, in spite of its weaknesses and blatant mistakes of its leaders, at least overthrew capitalism and landlordism. If it could happen then, such a revolution today, with its leadership learning from the past mistakes, expropriating the foreign and domestic capital, and based on Marxist internationalism, could transform this tragic land into a beacon of hope for the oppressed masses of South Asia, the Middle East, and far beyond. ♦

Fighting Fund Appeal

Socialist Appeal has explained that we live in the midst of a worldwide crisis of capitalism. This means that mass movements, revolutions, and counterrevolutions continue to unfold. The capitalists are unable to reestablish stability, as every measure they take to fix this system creates more unrest.

Recently, we have seen the revolution in North Africa and the Middle East spread to Turkey. Turkey was thought to be an island of stability for imperialism. This was followed by massive protests in Brazil, one of the few countries that did "relatively well" during the crisis. And now, the Egyptian Revolution has reigned!

Battles have also continued in Greece as the present weak capitalist government shut down the public broadcasting system. Portugal's government was on the verge of collapse, and a cabinet reshuffle will succeed only in buying a few more weeks before the next crisis.

One by-product of the industrialization of capitalism is that the working class is a larger proportion of the population of the world than it has ever been. This fact, coupled with the role of the working class in production, transportation, and communication, means it has tremendous power. It will not be easy for the big business to defeat the working class on a world scale.

The present leadership of the working class fails to explain to the working class the power that it has and refuses to show a way forward. They do not have confidence in the working class and its ability to run society and bring to birth a new socialist world. The Workers International League and the IMT have complete confidence in our class. We examine the present situation from the perspective of the working class, explaining the cause of

the problems as well as the solutions. We put forward a program and a strategy to lead the working class to victory.

However, building the WIL and the IMT and expanding *Socialist Appeal* costs money. This money can only come from our class—big business will not fund our efforts. That is why we raise money through the Fighting Fund.

Our Fighting Fund target is \$15,050 for this year. This year, we have broken the collection into regions, and the collection at our recent Midwest Regional School was just the beginning. A total of \$3,710 was pledged, \$3,100 of it from comrades in the Midwest region. This is on top of \$2,400 we had already collected in the first few months of the year. The branches in the region plan on putting on more Fighting Fund parties between now and the end of the year to reach the full \$5,000 Fighting Fund target set for the Midwest for 2013.

Comrades made big sacrifices to raise this money, and we will also be reaching out to comrades who were unable to attend, and also to sympathizers and *Socialist Appeal* readers to raise even more. If the success of this collection is any indication, we can be confident that all the regions will reach their targets by the end of the year.

This will mean building Marxist influence here in the U.S. and around the world. Armed with a Marxist leadership, the working class can put an end to the horrors of capitalism and create a much better life for all.

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Work, Capitalism, and Socialism Part 1

by Dana Cooper

“It sounds good on paper, but socialism will never work, because if everybody gets everything they need whether they work or not, then there is no incentive to work at all!” This is one of the most typical and caricatured arguments against socialism.

Capitalism has had over two centuries to prove to the working class that it is the best system possible and that working under capitalism will make you happy as long as you work hard. Strangely enough, a report published in 2010 shows that the U.S. job satisfaction is at the lowest level it has been for two decades, and it also indicates that job satisfaction despite up-and-downswings in the economy—is continuously spiraling downwards. A recent Gallup poll shows that 71% of American workers are “not engaged” or “actively disengaged” from their work regardless of where on the income ladder they fall.

These findings seem to confuse bourgeois economists because in an economy like this, people “should be grateful to have a job.” As they are not able to see beyond the narrow limits of capitalism, they are incapable of finding a real explanation and solution.

Among politicians and companies, the study has sparked a fear for decreasing innovation, and therefore, decreasing success among American companies, thus further exacerbating the economic crisis.

On the other hand, the survey has created an increased focus on what it is that makes workers happy in their jobs and therefore more productive. The results of this research might not surprise you—but the implications are much more far-reaching than most capitalists would like.

Side effects of the system: Sickness and suicides

Before moving on to describe the positive outcomes of working, let us take a look at the consequences of not being engaged in your job or being unemployed.

According to Gallup, “American workers who are emotionally disconnected from their work and workplace are about as likely as the unemployed—but far less likely than those who are engaged in their jobs—to report they are in excellent health.”

In previous articles in *Socialist Appeal* we have described the effects of lack of access to basic health care in the U.S. The already unequal health care system in the United States became even more inaccessible after the crisis, and this is not a phenomenon reserved for this great capitalist country alone.

According to Reuters: “Austerity is having a devastating effect on health in



Europe and North America, driving [up] suicide, depression, and infectious diseases and reducing access to medicines and care . . .”

At least 5 million Americans have lost access to health care directly because of the crisis.

A trend becomes clear when looking at all the recent statistics: not only are more people unhappy with their jobs, more people are depressed, more people are in bad health—and it is no longer the youth and older adults who dominate the numbers.

Since 2009, the number of deaths by suicide have exceeded the number of people killed in car accidents in the U.S. According to previous statistics, people under 35 or older adults are more likely to commit suicide, but the most recent numbers suggest a dramatic increase in suicides among middle-aged people between 35 and 64 years old over the last decade. Not coincidentally, the same age group dominated those disengaged in their work in the Gallup survey, as well as those who are more unhealthy.

The Centers for Disease Control states: “Possible contributing factors for the rise in suicide rates among middle-aged adults include the recent economic downturn (historically, suicide rates tend to correlate with business cycles, with higher rates observed during times of economic hardship).”

And further: “These results highlight the need for suicide prevention strategies that address mental health issues and the stresses and challenges that middle-aged adults are likely to face. Such stresses include economic challenges, dual caregiver responsibilities (children and aging parents), and potential health problems.”

What these strategies might be, we are not told.

No Confidence

Socialist Appeal has many times explained the impact of the crisis on American society. Below are some recent numbers from a report published in the beginning of this year called “Diminished Lives and Futures: A Portrait of America in the Great-Recession Era.” The report states that: “Some 73 percent [of Americans] either lost a job themselves, or had a member of their household, a close relative, or a friend lose a job at some point in the past four years . . . Those who were laid off during the recession and fortunate enough to find new employment are generally settling for less in their new positions.”

The most disconcerting finding is that people generally do not have any confidence that the economy will recover any time soon. “Just 32% believe that economic conditions will be better next year. An equal number believes they will actually get worse . . . When asked how long they thought it will take before the economy is fully recovered, just 12% say they expect this to happen in the near future (one or two years). One-third think full recovery is three to five years away. The majority (54%) either think it will take between 6 and 10 years (25%), or say that America will never (29%) fully recover from the Great Recession, or that they don’t see this happening within a decade.”

Though the U.S. technically isn’t in a recession any longer, this shows that the Americans don’t have much confidence in an improvement of their lives in the future. One might say that though capitalism sounds good on paper the reality is nothing but a human disaster—even in the most advanced capitalist country on earth.

Alienation, or, What work is like under capitalism

"I did not understand till long afterwards why this labor was really hard and excessive. It was less by reason of its difficulty, than because it was forced, imposed, obligatory; and it was only done through fear of the stick . . . It once came into my head that if it were desired to reduce a man to nothing—to punish him atrociously, to crush him in such a manner that the most hardened murderer would tremble before such a punishment, and take fright beforehand—it would be necessary to give to his work a character of complete uselessness, even to absurdity."

These words of Dostoyevsky describe the torture of prison work, i.e., the torture of being forced to do endless work for no real purpose or recognition. It should not be a surprise to anybody that the recent research in well-being and productivity show that this kind of work—cyclical, boring, routine work, even when it is remunerated, is demoralizing and does not increase productivity, but quite the opposite.

Not being engaged in your work is the result of being alienated from it. Capitalism exists on the basis of social production of wealth, with private appropriation of the surplus. What does this mean? It means that production under capitalism has been concentrated, expanded, and developed on such a vast scale that only on the basis of some form of planning and collaboration can society produce the things we need.

It also means that although the majority of the population works to produce commodities and services, we do not own the means of production, which are owned by a handful of capitalists. Nor do we get much more than the bare necessities as the fruit of our labor. The product of our creativity, brains, nerves, and bodies is not our own. What we produce while at work belongs to someone else, as what we produce is intended above all for sale by the capitalists on the market. This is what Karl Marx termed alienation.

"The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home. His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it."

One might think that if working is so unpleasant, people should be happy to be unemployed. But this is simply not true. Loss of income and access to housing and health care for yourself and your family is devastating. Even in countries with free health care, free education, and high unemployment benefits, unemployment causes higher rates of mortality, depression, high blood pressure, diabetes, stress, heart diseases, and suicide. It is not just the loss of income that matters, but also the

loss of social contacts in the workplace, and not feeling productive or valued as a contributor to society.

What is work—and why do people do it?

Work is to a large extent what differentiates humans from the animal world. Labor—human interaction with, manipulation, and modification of our natural surroundings—played a decisive role in the development of the human brain and the transition from ape to man, as explained by Frederick Engels back in 1876.

But in capitalist society, work usually is only acknowledged as "real" work if it is productive, i.e., if it creates a profit for the capitalists. This has led to a limited understanding of work as only being work if it is paid for. From that conclusion flow many misunderstandings as to how capitalism works, and how class exploitation functions generally. In fact, if you look the word "work" up in the dictionary, it is defined as an activity that involves mental and/or physical effort in order to achieve a purpose or a result.

Thus, work and labor are almost everything we do as humans, and most work we do is unpaid. Even when you work a paid job you are performing both paid and unpaid labor. Average wages are calculated so they cover the basic needs of the worker, and do not equal the actual amount of value the worker has created while on the job. As Marx explained, the surplus value produced by the worker over and above that which he receives back in wages is unpaid labor, and it is this that forms the basis of rent, interest, and profit.

Marx described human labor as a positive and a creative activity, but under capitalism, the result of this activity is alienated from the worker. The argument that the main incentive to work is the money you get paid, might in many cases be

true for workers under capitalism, but it is by no means the only reason why people work—and a wage alone is not enough to make people satisfied with their job.

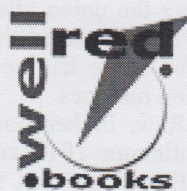
Even under capitalism we see a positive but limited creative activities in all corners of society. People go through tremendous and tedious challenges and effort for no real "productive" purpose whatsoever. How do you explain why people bother learn how to sew or knit, when it is often a lot cheaper and better quality to buy the mass-produced products at the store? How to explain the fact that people spend endless of hours planting and keeping a garden, or doing work in their back yard, instead of just laying on the couch? How do you explain the endless hours people spend learning to play an instrument even though the chances that they will be famous and rich as a result are abysmally small? Why do people spend months training to run a marathon, which is extremely exhausting and painful, and yet after having done it once, they often do it again?

The answer is simple. It is an answer that psychologists and occupational therapists have known for decades: doing work with a clear result, having an impact on your work, seeing progress in your work, and working with other people increases your self-esteem and gives you more energy. In short—it makes you more happy.

New York University psychologist Robert Reiner and others have conducted research that shows that doing crafts is distressing, produces drops in blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety, and depression. In fact, doing crafts as a hobby has the same basic effect as meditation. It is clear that though capitalism only values waged labor that produces profits, it does not mean that humans are "lazy by nature" or that humans prefer not to work at all. ♦

To be continued in issue 76...

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From a Spark to a Flame: The Matchgirls' Strike of 1888

by Stephen Domville

In July 1888, 1,400 female workers walked out on strike at the Bryant and May factory in East London. 125 years later, that struggle still holds a place of honor in the history of the labor movement. Given the similar conditions faced by workers today in places like Bangladesh, the heroic example of these workers holds many lessons for us today in the struggle to end the "horror without end" of capitalism.

The famous Matchgirls' Strike, which involved over three thousand workers in one way or another, would begin a process that saw a rise in industrial militancy and the move towards "new unionism," where large numbers of workers would be organized into general unions ready to stand up to the old reactionary leadership of the existing craft unions. Frederick Engels would call it the "light jostle needed for the entire avalanche to move."

The first thing to note about the Matchgirls' strike is that they were, in the main, just girls—some as young as twelve. For the working class of the 19th century, childhood was short-lived, with child labor being commonplace in the great cities of the post-industrial revolution. Conditions in the factories were particularly poor—something that Engels noted on his arrival in England, and which inspired him to write *The Condition of the Working Class in England* to draw attention to this.

At the Bryant and May matchmaking factory in Bow, conditions were especially bad for the workers. All were low-paid, working very long hours with few, if any of the rights we take for granted today. Workers could be sacked or fined at the will of the management. In addition, the phosphorus fumes created in the factory and trapped by the lack of ventilation were lethal. It directly caused a form of cancer—"phossy jaw"—which could be seen in the yellow skin and facial deformations which marked those who worked there.

No wonder there was a strong sense of solidarity among the mainly Irish workforce. When the bosses today talk of "deregulation" to "free up industry," these are the sort of conditions they would wish us to return to.

There is clear evidence that a mood of resistance inside the factory had been building up for sometime. The main boss, Theodore Bryant, had deducted a shilling from each worker's wage to pay for a statue of Liberal politician William Gladstone.

Some of the workers went down to the unveiling in 1882 to pelt the statue with stones. Some even cut their skin and spilled blood onto the monument, stating that they had already paid for it with their blood. Some strike actions had taken place at the factory in 1881 and 1886, but these had produced few results.

In 1888, the article "White Slavery in London" was published, written by the radical journalist Annie Besant, which exposed the terrible conditions within the factory. It was noted that the firm had just declared a huge rise in profits, yet pay remained pathetic, even by East London standards. When the boss sacked three workers he believed had been Besant's informers, the matchgirls decided to take action.



The decision was made to strike and out they went. For three weeks they stayed out. A strike HQ was established and support sought and got from the London Trades Council. With no strike pay or benefits, the workers had to organize door-to-door collections and other fund-raising exercises to keep going. They marched to Fleet Street to gain support from Annie Besant and later visited Parliament to speak to MPs and then linked arms to march back along the Embankment.

Although Annie Besant, along with fellow Fabian Socialist Herbert Burrows played an important role in promoting the struggle and establishing the union afterwards, recent research has suggested that their role in leading the strike has been rather overstated in union histories.

Historian Louise Raw, in her book *Striking a Light* (Continuum 2011 edition), has noted that Besant showed no

interest in "revolutionary socialism or early syndicalism" (p225) and considered "unionization to be counterproductive" (p226) so far as advancing the matchgirls' claim for a better deal.

Indeed, she was initially opposed to the strike itself as a way forward. Louise Raw and others confirm that the real leadership came from the girls themselves, inside the factory. The brutal conditions bred militancy within rather than it being imported in from outside.

Initially, the bosses made all the usual threats about moving the factory and so on to break the strike. However, after three weeks of no production, the owners caved in—the strike was won. The three thousand workers returned to work in triumph.

However, the job did not stop there. On July 27, the first meeting of the Union of Women Match Makers was held and premises were soon obtained using money left over from the strike fund. This union would soon grow and be renamed to take in both male and female workers.

Raw's history of the strike also notes something else of importance. Most Victorian histories suggest that this strike was just some sort of isolated incident.

However, there is clear evidence that their victory served as an inspiration to many other disputes that would follow in the next few years. Raw provides evidence of a sharp rise in strikes in 1889, a number of which involved women. Most notable of these was the Great Dock Strike of 1889. Many of those involved in that strike were directly connected in one way or another to those who took part in the matchgirls' strike.

In 1892, Engels would write about the East End, saying "... it has shaken off its torpid despair, it has returned to life, and has become the home of what is called the 'New Unionism,' that is to say, of the organization of the great mass of 'unskilled' workers." The rise of new unions with new leaders would take the battle to a new level with the successful fight for an eight-hour working day.

Today, the Bryant and May factory in Bow is no more. The building still stands but it was converted into luxury apartments some years ago. However, as a shining example of how militancy can pay, the fight of the matchgirls and their part in the rise of the labor movement in London and beyond remains of great importance to all activists today. It is a concrete example of what can be achieved if we fight with the understanding that the bosses' interests and the workers' interests are diametrically opposed. ♦

Trotsky's Relevance Today

As part of our ongoing commemoration of the centenary of Ted Grant's birth, we present excerpts from a piece written in 1990 for the 50th anniversary of Trotsky's assassination. Written at a time when capitalism was already being reintroduced in Eastern Europe, and the USSR was on the verge of collapse, Ted's insight and revolutionary optimism shine through. We encourage our readers to read the full article and to explore the Ted Grant online archive at www.tedgrant.org.

The Russian revolution has been justified historically, whatever the vicissitudes which Russia may go through in the next period. The work of Lenin and Trotsky is imperishable. Armed with the ideas and organizational methods of Lenin and of Trotsky, the proletariat will be invincible. Their revolt is absolutely inevitable. The gains in the standard of living in Europe, America, and Japan are actually welcome from this point of view. They have strengthened the proletariat immeasurably in comparison with the pre-war period.

The process of organization of the international market and the integration of the world economy, which led to a partial overcoming of the crisis of capitalism for a temporary historical period, will on the other hand enormously exacerbate that crisis at a later stage. The development of the productive forces gave a respite to capitalism. But this will inevitably turn dialectically into its opposite . . . New and even greater rivalries will develop between the capitalist powers.

. . . The analysis of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky of the "market" was correct. In the fact that capitalism depends on the unpaid labor of the working class lies the germ of the crisis which will develop in the future. The very process of accumulation, or in the words of Marx, "over-accumulation," is in itself a guarantee of crisis in the future.

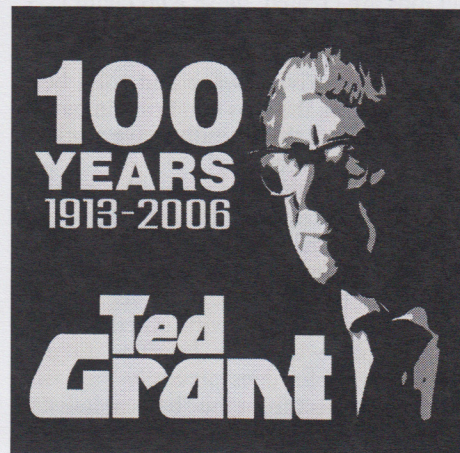
In avoiding crisis, new massive contradictions have been created. The present "prosperity" is very fragile. With credit, and with armaments spending which produces fictitious capital, with the concentration and centralization of capital through parasitic takeovers, the ruling class is preparing future crisis.

Nevertheless, the development of the world economy lays the foundations for international socialism in computers, micro-electronics, and automation. Now it is entirely possible in the main capitalist countries and in the Soviet Union to introduce a six-hour day and a four-day week without reductions in pay. This would give the necessary time for the proletariat to run industry and the state.

The material, political, and social

basis of socialism has been laid. What is lacking has been the consciousness and understanding of the proletariat and a mass revolutionary vanguard to harness the inevitable movement of the working class.

Trotsky explained time and again that internationalism is not for sentimental reasons but because of the integration of the world economy, which was capitalism's historically progressive task. This has been carried to an extent which could not have been even dreamed of by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky. The world economy is one at the present time. This in its turn will prepare the way for enormous international movements of the working class.



. . . Trotsky, developing the ideas of Marx and Lenin, explained that the activities of men and women are decisive. "The Marxist comprehension of historical necessity," he wrote in *In Defense of Marxism*, "has nothing in common with fatalism. Socialism is not realized 'by itself,' but is the result of the struggle of living forces, classes and their parties." The activities of Marxists are absolutely vital. Without this, the inevitable revolt of the proletariat would never be carried through to a successful conclusion.

The whole history of the last 70 years has demonstrated the correctness of the ideas of Trotsky. Again and again the masses will take to the road of struggle. 1968 in France was a harbinger of events on an international scale. Inevitably the ideas of Trotsky and Lenin—for the taking of power into the hands of the working class—will gain greater credence among the active layers of the working class and those conscientious intellectuals seeking a way out of the crisis of capitalism and Stalinism which will unfold in the coming years.

The "liberal" face of capitalism in the West has come to the fore in the last few decades, with the "enlightened" control by big business of freedom of speech, of the press, and of organization. Democracy in the advanced capitalist countries, Trotsky explained, rested on the "spoliation of the

colonies," in the same way that "ancient democracy was based on slavery." Democracy is undoubtedly the most convenient and flexible method of domination by the capitalists. But inevitably, once the revolt of the masses takes place, big business will change its tactics, as they did in the epoch between the wars. It is entirely superficial to imagine that democracy on a capitalist basis can be maintained.

In the event of the failure of a new wave of revolutions, it would be inevitable that they will turn to the methods of reaction of the past. Already in Hungary and Poland ideologists of the capitalist class are talking about the need for a dictatorship—a capitalist dictatorship. Walesa in Poland, who began his activity in struggle against Stalinist totalitarianism, is now advocating what would be in effect a totalitarian system in Poland, a complete dictatorship of capital in order to force through the changes necessary to establish the capitalist system in Poland. In reality, capitalism will reveal its impasse in the coming period. At the same time we see the impasse in the USSR. Both Stalinism and capitalism are doomed. A new wave of revolutions is inevitable and irresistible.

The outstanding characteristic of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky was faith in the capacity and understanding of the working class to carry through a transformation of society. They understood that the working class is the only through-and-through progressive class which can succeed in preparing the way for socialism.

Only the program and method of Lenin and Trotsky will serve the needs and the interests of the working class. The revolutionary youth must study the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and especially Trotsky—particularly the inter-war works which have great topicality—if they are to equip themselves for the tasks of struggle which lie in the future.

As a theoretician, Trotsky probably stands even higher than Lenin. He stood on the shoulders of Lenin, carrying the ideas of Marxism in the epoch of Stalinist reaction. The internationalists who have gathered in many countries of the world should not be worried by the smallness of their forces at the present time. Events will teach the masses. We have had a fresh demonstration of this in the campaign over the poll tax. With the method of Lenin and Trotsky, forces will be created which will stand the test of events. In this anniversary year of Leon Trotsky we can say to the "Old Man," we salute you, internationally the Marxist tendency carries on your work.

We owe a debt of gratitude to that great man, Trotsky. Martyr to the Stalinist counterrevolution, inspirer, thinker, he will live forever in the memory of the working class when they achieve socialism. ♦

Grocery Workers in the South

by Erik Medina in Georgia

I work as a bagger at Publix, a southern supermarket chain that is one of the largest and most profitable in the country. Publix has 1,073 stores, 70% of which are located in Florida. There are another 180 in Georgia, including the store at which I work, and the other 138 are distributed throughout Alabama, Tennessee, and South Carolina. I work in the customer service department, which includes bagging groceries and cleaning the store. Recent events at my store have increasingly shown the state of food and retail workers in the south—and throughout the country—as the crisis of capitalism is felt by every layer of the working class.

Publix is also the largest employee-owned retail grocery company. “Employee-owned” means that Publix stock is not open to the public, and is only available to board members and full-time workers of at least one year, or part-time workers who have worked at least 1,100 hours. However, “ownership” is far from equally distributed, so over half of the company is still in the hands of the board of directors and the Jenkins family, and this is very clearly understood by the workers.

Within the past few months, the workers in my department have experienced a major decrease in hours. There are barely any full-time workers in the front of the store, so the best we could get was 35 hours. I know of only one worker who still gets that many. Most have been cut down to between 5 and 20 hours. With wages between \$7 and \$9, this is barely enough for gas to get to work. Though flexible, the schedule is inconsistent, with the days and hours we work changing week to week. And yet, every other department is overworked and understaffed, and to top it all off, the front is still hiring. This leaves many workers wondering what the company has to gain from these cuts.

Ultimately, this cut in hours is a tactic to deny workers benefits—which cost the company money and cut into profits. Because it takes so long for part-time workers to be eligible, if they drive down hours enough, it will take years. For me, it will be at least two and one-half years before I am eligible for the benefits and stock ownership plans that give Publix its glowing public reputation. Cuts in hours and irregular shifts are also part of a broader trend towards scheduling based exactly on what will be necessary for customer traffic. This is all wonderful technology that could be used to alleviate the burden of the worker and maximize efficiency, but when done in the interests of profits, this only efficiently fattens the wallets of the biggest stockholders and exhausts the worker, desperate to be available for more hours that would be denied if we aren’t effectively “on call” all

the time. This explains how Publix raked in a hefty \$1.5 billion in profits in 2011.

This is not new to the capitalist class. With monopolies like Walmart forcing competitors to adopt their part-time-dependent business models, and the decreasing numerical strength of unions generally, a general shift toward more and more part-time jobs in a sector of the economy already heavily reliant on part-time workers took place beginning in the 1990s. In 2008 the onset of the capitalist crisis exacerbated this process, leaving many workers needing second or third jobs. I’ve talked to many of my fellow workers who hold another job or two, and statistics support this trend. As the unemployment rate decreases and jobs are created, those who claim U.S. capitalism is in recovery fail to see the reality for the workers. These are not jobs that provide a living wage and solid benefits. These are the jobs that bring in barely enough for rent, that literally leave workers hungry. What a recovery!

Publix has thus far avoided a reputation for poor treatment of its workers and lack of concern for our needs, and it has consistently been ranked among the best companies to work for. And yet when I share my experiences with others outside the workplace they are horrified to discover that Publix does precisely the same things we expect from the “bad capitalists” like Walmart. Who are well-intentioned consumer activists to boycott when every major company employs the same tactics and workers throughout the retail and grocery industry have the same experiences? Particularly in the South, with a low unionization rate generally, and at companies like Publix that are completely nonunion, the workers have no existing organization through which to fight back for a decent quality of life.

This situation is partially a result of Obamacare, a plan that benefits the mega health care corporations at the expense of the workers, and which also squeezes small businesses, many of which are driven to bankruptcy because they are unable to afford coverage for their workers. Larger companies simply avoid scheduling workers with enough hours to be eligible. At Publix, it takes far too long for most to qualify for coverage, and even then, it doesn’t always cover enough to make copays manageable.

This is not to say genuine health care reform is not necessary. Every worker deserves universal, quality coverage, in the form of a socialized national health care system, but such a measure is unthinkable to the capitalist class. Instead, they point to the limitations of Obamacare as a condemnation of any endeavor to provide necessary benefits. They declare that universal coverage is simply impossible and unaffordable. Much of what Trotsky said in the

Transitional Program regarding the slow death of the capitalist system rings true today. In 1938, he eloquently refuted the cries of the defenders of capitalism:

“Property owners and their lawyers will prove the ‘unrealizability’ of these demands. Smaller, especially ruined capitalists, in addition will refer to their account ledgers. The workers categorically denounce such conclusions and references. The question is not one of a ‘normal’ collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization, and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. ‘Realizability’ or ‘unrealizability’ is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.”

Flexibility for the bosses, inconsistency for us workers, and the present cuts show that Publix workers need a militant union. Recently, when I’ve spoken with other workers about the specific issues taking place at our store, I’ve drawn their attention to the need for a union. This is met with mixed responses, and though most workers support it there is a significant element of fear, given threats of closing down stores, and workers being fired for their union support. But with a bold lead and mass action by the working class, this fear can be combatted and overcome.

With even the “best” companies leaving workers in intolerable conditions, and tepid attempts at reform failing to improve things—in the midst of rising profits—one can’t help but wonder whether the capitalist system itself is the reason for this problem. From the conversations I’ve had with coworkers, and even some customers, experience is slowly teaching the fundamental lesson that the interests of the workers and the bosses are diametrically opposed.

One of many times I asked my managers for more hours, I was told, “We assign hours based off business needs.” This is a common response heard by countless retail and service workers, and it shows the bankruptcy of a system that prioritizes profits over the workers who actually create the wealth. Based on this experience, increasing numbers of workers throughout the South are drawing conclusion that socialism is the only solution: true, democratic, public ownership and control over the key levers of the economy, including the food production and distribution companies. ♦

Report: Midwest Regional School

Over 30 comrades and contacts, mostly from Minneapolis-St. Paul, St. Louis, and Madison, but also from Portland, Dallas, NY, NJ, Boston, Italy/North Carolina, met in Minneapolis on the weekend of June 29 and 30 for the first-ever Midwest Regional School. The presence of so many comrades from other regions, including a comrade from the Italian section of the IMT, *Falce Martello*, was a huge boost and made the weekend that much more electric.

The school was opened by Derrick Watson, the Minneapolis branch secretary, who read inspiring greetings received from the Pakistani section of the IMT. The first day's discussions then centered on the ideas of Ted Grant, based in large part on Alan Woods' new biography, with an overview lead off by WIL National Secretary John Peterson. With the backdrop of the world crisis of capitalism and the mass movements erupting from Turkey to Brazil, Egypt to Greece, the need for Marxist theory and clarity has never been greater, and there is much to learn from Ted's life and work.

We then had two focused discussions on the questions of Proletarian Bonapartism, and the Work of the Marxists in the Mass Organizations, led off respectively by Josh Luckner and David May, both from St. Louis. All three discussions on Ted's ideas were dynamic and engaging, and comrades' political level was clearly expanded as a result.

If we were to succinctly describe Ted, comrades agreed that tenacity, enthusiasm, optimism, and persistence would be a good start. Add to that his substantive theoretical contributions, confidence in the working class, and his strategic / tactical flexibility and perspectives, and it is clear why revolutionary Marxists need to learn more about Ted and read his works.

We then broke into smaller groups and discussed the nuts and bolts of selling the paper. A list of ten commonly asked questions was drawn up by Dana Cooper, who introduced the discussion, and the small groups practiced answering the questions. We then reconvened and comrades shared their groups' best answers. Some were simple and to the point, others humorous but politically sharp, and all were insightful, and the exercise really helped comrades break the ice and build everyone's confidence for selling the paper in the months ahead.

That evening, comrades gathered for a barbecue / Fighting Fund party and enjoyed grilled burgers, hot dogs, salads, cookies, and a beverage or two (or three!). A guitar eventually made its appearance, and several comrades and contacts took turns playing, including one contact (who has now agreed to join!) who is a twice-Grammy Award nominated folk/blues musician. From blues



and jazz to revolutionary songs, it was a great end to a fun evening.

Day two began with a discussion on the lessons of Bolshevism, led off by Tom Trottier from New York, which was also followed by a lively and wide-ranging discussion, on everything from the dramatic ups and downs experienced by the Bolsheviks, the dynamic nature of democratic centralism, the need for political and theoretical clarity combined with extreme tactical flexibility, the dialectical relationship between the class, the party, and the leadership, the national question and Rosa Luxemburg's ideas generally, the parallels with today's situation and the stage of the development the WIL is passing through, and the Bolsheviks' unstoppable determination to overcome any and all obstacles.

After all these excellent theoretical, historical, and political discussions, we discussed another crucial part of our work: contact work, recruitment, and consolidation, introduced by Mark Rahman from New Jersey. Many experiences and stories of success and failure were shared by the comrades in the robust discussion that followed. Winning people to the ideas is only the first step: we must then consolidate them and educate them in our ideas, program, perspectives, methods, and traditions!

We then heard an international report on the work of the IMT from comrade Fred Weston, live from London via Skype. With only 30 minutes, it was impossible to relate everything, but the comrade managed to fit in quite a lot, including a short overview of world perspectives. From the work of our comrades in Canada and Mexico, to the exciting developments in Pakistan, Italy, Britain, and throughout the Middle East and North Africa, it is clear that the political authority of the IMT has never been higher, and the possibilities have never been as far-ranging. Excellent questions were asked, including what methods have proved most useful around the world in developing the student and campus work, which Fred answered clearly and constructively.

Which brought to our final session: the finance appeal, which was introduced by comrade Kevin Nance and carried out by Tom Trottier. See this issue's Fighting Fund appeal for more details.

In another reflection of the enthusiasm

for the ideas, branches and individual comrades also bought \$365 in political materials, much of it to take back for tabling in their own areas.

Throughout the weekend, various comrades took turns chairing the sessions, which was valuable experience and helped keep the sessions on time, and everyone also worked collectively to set up and tear down for the meetings. Videos of some of the sessions were recorded, and we will work on making them available ASAP.

The participation of the comrades in the discussions was fantastic. Time was filled to capacity—and sometimes we would have benefited from having even more time—and everyone had a chance to speak, ask questions, make suggestions, share experiences, etc. The overall political level of the discussions was very impressive and shows a qualitative growth in the organization, even since our last big gathering in Pittsburgh at our National Congress last November. The school ended with rousing renditions of *The Internationale* and *Bandiera Rossa*—although many comrades are still learning all the words!

Due to careful advance planning by the MWRS organizing committee, the budget set and the money raised in attendance fees almost exactly matched the expenses. The food was plentiful and delicious (much of it homemade!), the meetings started and ended punctually, and there was coffee and breakfast in the mornings. The Minneapolis comrades are to be congratulated on organizing the accommodation, food, meeting space, and transportation so smoothly. By having the logistics organized well in advance, comrades could focus their energies on the main reason they had come: the politics. It was a true collective effort!

If some summarizing comments can be made about the entire weekend, it is that the comrades were filled with enthusiasm for the ideas of Marxism, confidence in the power of the working class and the energy of the youth, excitement for the prospects of the WIL and the IMT, pride in what we have collectively achieved so far, and an all-around feeling of camaraderie. We are sure this will be an inspiring model for the other regional meetings we have planned in the months ahead. ♦

...Edward Snowden and the NSA Continued

The Russian foreign minister expressed his displeasure at the tone of the U.S.: "We consider the attempts we are now seeing to blame the Russian side for breaking U.S. laws and being almost in on the plot totally baseless and unacceptable, and even an attempt to threaten us."

The Chinese and Russians can't pass up a chance of poking a finger in the eye of the U.S. at the moment. The hypocritical remarks of U.S. imperialism regarding "democracy" and "human rights" in China and Russia have now gotten a well-deserved response. The Chinese government, which is no friend of human rights, or any other rights for that matter, declared through its mouthpiece, *The People's Daily*: "In a sense, the United States has gone from a 'model of human rights' to 'an eavesdropper on personal privacy,' the 'manipulator' of the centralized power over the international internet, and the mad 'invader' of other countries' networks."

The U.S., sufficiently reprimanded, had to retreat. John Kerry appealed for "calm" from his Russian "friends." If you wanted to be "technical," he said, there is no extradition treaty between the Russia and the U.S.; however, there are also "norms of conduct" and upholding "the rule of law."

What happened to human rights and freedom of speech? Usually U.S. secretaries of state are very keen to raise such matters. Maybe Kerry was not so keen to mention these things while visiting the arch-reactionary regime of Saudi Arabia. Or, it might be because in this circumstance, he and his government wanted to trample all over precisely such principles.

Incidentally, on the question of the "rule of law," the British government recently returned a Saudi prince to his (royal) family. He had been serving a prison sentence for beating his servant to death in London. Now, obviously, under the "rule of law," if you are a Saudi prince, you cannot sit in a British jail like any other person. Rather, a prison exchange agreement was hastily cobbled together, and the prince was returned to Saudi Arabia after serving only one year. The hypocrisy of these people is astonishing.

The U.S. government is not pleased with Ecuador's offer of asylum and has put heavy pressure on the country. It has threatened not to renew a trade treaty which is set to expire in July. It is clear that losing the concessions would be a blow to the Ecuadorean economy, which is highly dependent on the U.S. for its cut-flowers and fruit exports. It amounts to saying that unless you hand over Snowden, we will make tens of thousands of workers in your country unemployed. This imperialist bullying is disgraceful.

For his part, Ecuadorean President

Rafael Correa expressed his sympathy for the people of the U.S. and added that he is not "anti-U.S.," and that if the same logic was followed, then the U.S. government must be "anti-Ecuadorean," as they are still harboring those responsible for the banking crisis in Ecuador in 1999, despite requests that they be extradited.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro made a similar point, pointing out that the U.S. has refused to extradite self-confessed terrorist Posada Carriles to Venezuela. There is one rule for small countries with left-leaning governments and another for imperial powers. As we go to press, both Venezuela and Nicaragua have said they would grant Snowden asylum. But it remains to be seen whether this happens and how he would travel to either country.

If anyone would like to have an idea of what awaits Snowden if the U.S. gets hold of him, it's enough to look at the case of Bradley Manning. After arresting him in May 2010 for having been the source of the Wikileaks' cablegate documents, the U.S. military kept him under torture conditions. He was not allowed to sleep, he was kept isolated from other prisoners, he was only allowed one book and one magazine, and he was constantly harassed and humiliated. This lasted for almost a year, until the pressure became too much for the U.S. government and it put him in more normal prison conditions.

It seems that this treatment broke his spirit, because Manning has pleaded guilty on most of the charges. He has also accepted that part of his trial to be held in secret. Apparently, the U.S. government has magnanimously agreed to a maximum sentence of 16 years in return for Manning pleading guilty to 10 out of the 22 charges.

Still, the state is actively pursuing the remaining charges. The reason is probably to prepare the ground for a trial against other people who are or have been involved with WikiLeaks, like Julian Assange. The latter has now effectively been under house arrest, holed up in the Ecuadorean embassy in London for a year.

Edward Snowden, Julian Assange, and Bradley Manning are not Marxists. They probably don't consider themselves socialists either. Snowden appears to be some kind of libertarian. Nonetheless, their leaking must be seen in the context of the broader struggle against capitalism

and imperialism.

Is it a coincidence that the scandals rocking the establishment are being revealed in the midst of the deepest economic crisis for decades? How come Snowden managed to get so much attention for saying something that has been widely known for more than a decade? Far from being a coincidence, the scandals that are now being revealed are a symptom of the pressure that is building up in society. The economic crisis is manifesting itself as a crisis of the whole regime.

The scandals are gradually whittling away at the consciousness of the masses. They remove the mask of democracy from capitalist states and expose the naked class rule that lie beneath. This is the real crime of Assange, Manning, and Snowden. This is something the Russians and the Chinese do not condone either. They take the opportunity to score points against the U.S., yes, but they are not prepared to grant Snowden anything more than safe passage.

The only countries so far that have offered to consider an asylum request from Snowden are Venezuela, Ecuador, and Nicaragua. This is not an accident. Over a decade of revolution in Latin America has pushed the governments of many of these countries far to the left, and they are the only ones who are willing to stand up for the whistle-blowers. The Ecuadorean government in particular has taken a brave stand, and the labor movement across the world should support it in this.

As Marxists we are not surprised by these revelations about spying. Any class society has to rely on spies, informers, corruption, and deceit in order to keep a minority ruling over the majority. We support all those who are fighting to expose the rotten system that we're living in. Although we might not agree with everything that Snowden and the other whistle-blowers say, their revelations serve to remove the illusions of the masses in the system.

No more threats to countries offering whistleblowers asylum!

Release Manning and Assange! Drop all charges against Snowden!

No more secrets! Abolish secret courts and gag orders!

Open the records of the spy agencies to the public! ♦

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For a mass party of labor based on the unions—break with the Democrats and Republicans

Only organized labor has the numbers and resources to effectively challenge the bosses' parties. For a militant, class independent, socialist program to fight against the attacks of big business. By fighting for the working class majority at the polls, in the workplace, and on the streets, such a party could quickly become a mass force and turn American politics upside down.

The right to strike, union representation, and collective bargaining for all workers

Repeal all antiunion laws including Taft-Hartley. End compulsory arbitration and the victimization of trade unionists and those forming new unions. Organize the unorganized. Mobilize the rank and file and unite the labor movement to fight back against the bosses. No to concessions! For trade union democracy. All union officials to be regularly elected with the right of immediate recall by the membership. All officials to receive no more than the average wage of a skilled worker.

Full employment

No to layoffs. Thirty hours work for forty hours pay. The right to a secure, full-time job, full benefits, or a place in education. Job security for all temporary workers and interns with equal pay and treatment. For a massive program of useful public works to create quality union jobs to rebuild our infrastructure. For a national minimum wage of at least \$16 per hour. Wages to be tied to inflation through periodic Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA). For union control over hiring and firing. Establish union-controlled job training and hiring halls in communities with high unemployment. Voluntary retirement at age 55 with full benefits. No to the privatization of Social Security.

Safe, affordable housing for all

End homelessness. For an immediate moratorium on evictions. For the nationalization of foreclosed and vacant homes, to be allocated to those in need under democratic workers' and community control, with residents of foreclosed properties allowed to stay in their homes. No compensation to the foreclosing owners, except in cases of proven need. Rent for all housing, including Section 8 and government-owned housing, to be fixed at not more than 10 percent of wages, as part of a voluntary, national plan for housing.

Universal quality health care

For a socialized, national health care system. Free scientific research from the profit motive. Full access for all to the latest medical technology, treatments, and discoveries. Massively fund research for cures and treatment of AIDS, cancer and other diseases. Nationalize the health insurance companies, the medical equipment and pharmaceutical industries, the mega-hospital systems and related clinics, and integrate them into a single state-owned and democratically managed and administered health provider.

Quality education for all

Fully fund and expand our public schools, colleges, and universities. End corporate encroachment into the classroom. No to means testing, vouchers, charter schools, and privatization. No to "Race to the Top" and "No Child Left Behind." Abolish tuition fees and forgive student loans. Provide living grants and paid internships to all students. Nationalize the private universities and colleges and merge them into one united public system of higher education. For lifelong learning for all from the cradle to the grave.

Outlaw all forms of discrimination—equal rights for all

Equal pay for work of equal value. Full paid leave for expectant mothers after the 1st trimester; parental leave with full pay for up to two years after birth or adoption. Free and safe, quality after-school programs and child-care facilities in the workplace. Affordable public laundry services and subsidized restaurants serving healthy, quality food to help free working women from domestic servitude. Full reproductive rights up to and including abortion. No to discrimination on the basis of sexual preference, gender identity, and expression. Defend our civil liberties from attacks in the name of the "war on terror." For genuine freedom of expression. Nationalize the means of communication, and democratize access to the media and the use of public meeting spaces on the basis of proportional representation.

No to racism, profiling, and police brutality

No to racist and antiworker police, courts, and laws. End the phony war on drugs in the U.S. and internationally. Abolish the death penalty and release all political prisoners. For the immediate and unconditional legalization of all undocumented immigrants. Full rights and amnesty for immigrant workers and their families. End all racist immigration and asylum controls. For the right of residency and dual citizenship. For the right to speak one's own language. Access to Social Security with equal benefits for all. No to "guest worker" programs. For family reunification and an immediate end to raids and deportations. No to border walls, militarization, and repression on the border. For the unity of the working class: mobilize the labor movement to combat racism and discrimination and to improve conditions for all workers.

A socialized plan of production for agriculture

Nationalize the food distribution and agrochemical giants that destroy farmers' livelihoods and endanger public health in the pursuit of profit. A democratic plan of food production would protect small farmers' and agricultural workers' jobs and security. Fully fund nutrition assistance and extension programs. Full union rights for all agricultural workers.

Action to protect the environment and jobs

For public ownership and control over natural resources—the land, major industries, mining and logging companies, transport, oil, gas, and other energy—to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all. Environmental plans would be measured in generations, not fiscal quarters. Free and efficient public transportation for all.

Nationalize the key levers of the economy: the major industries, banks, and corporations

No to austerity—make the rich pay for the crisis! Break with the irrational chaos of the capitalist free market. Nationalize the Fortune 500. No compensation to the millionaires, only to those in genuine need. All nationalized companies to be run under democratic workers' control and management, and integrated into a socialist plan of production to meet the needs of society. Consolidate the nationalized banks into a single, publicly owned and administered national bank to protect workers' savings and guarantee affordable loans to all.

Socialist internationalism

End NAFTA, CAFTA, and pull out of the WTO and other bankers' deals that are the tools of imperialist exploitation. No to the FTAA and the TPP. Abolish the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and write off the debts imposed by Wall Street and imperialism. For international economic cooperation based on the interests of working people, not a handful of multinationals. No to the war on working people at home and abroad. Cut the military budget and invest instead in social needs. No to militarism and intervention in the Middle East and around the world: withdraw all troops from Iraq and Afghanistan now! End the embargo on Cuba. Hands off Latin America! Unite with Canadian and Latin American workers in a socialist federation of the Americas as part of a world socialist federation.

Learn More About and Join the WIL!

The Workers International League bases itself on the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky, and on the further development of these ideas by the International Marxist Tendency (www.marxist.com). Socialism has been tarnished in the minds of millions by the horrific experience of Stalinism and the continued lies and distortions of the ruling class. Stalinism was a historical aberration and a criminal, totalitarian caricature of genuine socialism. We fight for international socialism, in which the world working class has democratic control over the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Without democracy there can be no socialism! A workers' government in the U.S. would take over the vast wealth now owned by just a handful of individuals and democratically use it in the interests of everyone. We invite all those who are in agreement with the ideas expressed in *Socialist Appeal*, and who want to learn more about building a revolutionary Marxist alternative to capitalism, to contact us. ♦

Snowden, the NSA, and Imperialist Hypocrisy

by Niklas Albin Svensson



As Julian Assange and Bradley Manning have discovered, being a whistle-blower is not for the faint hearted. Now Edward Snowden has become the latest fugitive of U.S. imperialism, his only crime being that he told embarrassing truths about the U.S. government. Snowden exposed what has been known in many circles for years. That is, that the U.S. and UK governments have been conducting surveillance over all internet traffic. This has been going on for some time, since the very birth of the Internet itself. It is worth remembering that ARPAnet, the predecessor to the Internet, was developed by the U.S. military.

Obviously, most people were unaware of this. In particular, they were probably under the illusion that governments would only spy on "terrorists" and criminals while leaving normal, law-abiding citizens alone. This has now been shown to be false. Obama and other politicians claim that they are merely registering what they term "metadata," i.e., the parties involved in a phone call, the sender and recipient of an email, etc. This is supposed to calm people's fears that the government are listening in on their phone calls or reading their correspondence.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation posted an apt comment on this under the title "Why Metadata matters":

"They know you rang a phone sex service at 2:24 a.m. and spoke for 18 minutes. But they don't know what you talked about. They know you called the suicide prevention hotline from the Golden Gate Bridge. But the topic of the call remains a secret. They know you spoke with an HIV testing service, then your doctor, then your health insurance company in the same hour. But they don't know what was discussed. They know you received a call from the local NRA office while it was having a campaign against gun legislation, and then called your senators and congressional representatives immediately after. But the content of those calls remains safe from government intrusion. They know you called a gynecologist, spoke for a half hour, and then called the local Planned Parenthood's number later that day. But nobody knows what you spoke about."

The courts in the U.S. have proclaimed that an IP address really is like a postal address and that we therefore have no right to keep it private. Using that analogy, what the U.S. government is doing is the equivalent of ordering the postal service to register every single

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letter being sent in a big database. If you are then found to have somehow communicated with someone on a security service list, all your letters would be opened, read, and then resealed. Now, most people would probably find that very intrusive, and it is the sort of thing you'd expect from a totalitarian regime and not what we have been used to in the supposedly "democratic" West. As it turns out, the U.S. Postal Service has indeed photographed the exterior of every piece of mail sent in the last decade or so—160 billion pieces of mail each year.

All internet traffic that goes through either the U.S. or the UK—and that is almost all traffic—is being monitored. This is the kind of behavior that most people would expect from China or Iran, not from a western country. Yet this is really exactly the kind of behaviour we could expect from the secret service. Their aim is to help politicians, army officers, and multinational corporations get one up on the competition. The temptation to do so must be enormous.

Furthermore, the purpose of this is also to protect against the "enemy within," as they see it. They often make a lot of noise about monitoring right-wing extremists (Nazis, religious fundamentalists, etc.). Yet the main groups they worry about are left-wing groups. In Britain, *The Guardian* has revealed, the London Metropolitan Police keeps a list of 9,000 activists who are under surveillance. Certainly, a few right-wingers are among them, but given that the far right in Britain can mobilize a couple of thousand at most, it is undoubtedly mainly trade union activists and others active on the left that make up the bulk of them. Very few of these 9,000 even have a criminal record.

Just like Wikileaks, the PRISM scandal has caused the U.S. and the UK significant domestic and international embarrassment. Undoubtedly, other countries operate similar systems. Details of the Chinese, Iranian and Swedish systems are public, but with all certainty the Russians, the French, the Germans, and all the other great powers do the same thing. In comparison with the U.S. and the UK, however, the others have a small problem, though. Whereas the bulk of the world's internet traffic passes through the former, very little international traffic goes through Germany, Russia, or China.

This fact is one of the main reasons behind the recent complaints by the German government and the European Commission. They are not keen on the U.S. spying on them. For it is not only enemies that the U.S. spies on, but also allies.

Originally, in a typical bull-in-a-china-shop fashion, the U.S. government demanded the Chinese give up Snowden when he was in Hong Kong. Once he'd moved on to Russia, they demanded the Russians release this "criminal." However, the Russians and the Chinese do not like being treated like the playthings of U.S. imperialism, and they made this very clear in public statements.

Continued on page 14...